

# The Connecticut General Assembly

## House Democrats

James A. Amann  
*Speaker of the House*



Christopher Donovan  
*House Majority Leader*

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## **TRANSPORTATION PLAN DESERVES BIG BOOST** **House Democratic leaders call for full funding of TSB plan**

Speaker of the House Jim Amann (D-Milford) and House Majority Leader Chris Donovan (D-Meriden) said the time has come to fully fund the \$5 billion state Transportation Strategy Board's 10-year blueprint. The 2003 TSB plan offered a comprehensive approach for improving all facets of Connecticut's aging transportation infrastructure.

"When the Mianus River Bridge collapsed in 1983, Governor O'Neill came out with a \$6.5 billion transportation improvement plan, and the time has come to do it again," Amann said. "That was over 20 years ago and we are falling asleep at the switch. The Governor made a nice start last year and apparently wants a little more now, but with all due respect that is a nickel and dime approach that won't get the job done,"

"If we stand still or try a band-aid approach, traffic will continue to clog our highways," Donovan said. "We need attractive transportation alternatives that will entice commuters to leave their cars at home and take the bus or train to work."

The massive TSB plan includes a myriad of highway and mass transit projects along, and extending from, Interstates 95, 91, 84 and 395 corridors. The leaders want all projects to be prioritized by a committee led by a transportation 'czar' that will be responsible for overseeing implementation of the entire plan.

"We can't afford to miss this opportunity," said the Legislature's Transportation Committee House Chairman Tony Guerrera (D-Rocky Hill). "Connecticut's economy will live or die by the decisions we make about transportation today. This is a bold initiative that will pay dividends for generations to come."

Advocacy organizations such as the Connecticut Business & Industry Association and the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, call transportation a high priority because an inefficient infrastructure is costing the state jobs and productivity.

"In looking to the future, our transportation decisions must be centered around job growth," said Commerce Committee House Chairman Jeffrey Berger (D-Waterbury). "The Department of Economic and Community Development and Department of Transportation have not always worked together to implement the Transportation Strategy Board. Often times, projects are cherry picked. We need a culture of change within DECD and DOT, and this initiative will provide that change."

Last year, the Legislature approved the Governor's \$1.3 billion down payment on the TSB plan. Paying for the balance could come in the form of long term bonding, revenues from petroleum taxes, other sources such as tolls, or a combination of all.

"By adopting these initiatives and providing the infrastructure necessary for mass transit, we are investing in the future economic vitality of our state," said Rep. Cam Staples (D-New Haven), House Chairman of the Legislature's Finance, Revenue & Bonding Committee. "This means success for Connecticut in job growth and increased revenue."

With the latest state surplus estimates topping \$660 million, the legislators believe now may be the only time the General Assembly would consider such a bold commitment.

"As far as a funding it's all on the table, because this is that important," Amann said. "It must be done now when the budget is in pretty good shape, because I don't see us doing this when times are rougher."